

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Peter Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

We request that you immediately release FEMA's plans for hurricane preparedness and sheltering amid the coronavirus outbreak. Emergency systems across Florida and the nation are already stretched thin due to the coronavirus pandemic, and millions of people are currently struggling financially. With the Atlantic hurricane season on the horizon, it is imperative that a strategy is put in place as soon as possible so that communities, individuals, and families can adequately prepare. Coastal communities have no time to lose, and we cannot wait any longer.

More than a dozen annual forecasts have predicted an above-average hurricane season for this year. Even before the start of official hurricane season on June 1, we have already seen Tropical Storm Arthur threaten the coasts of our southeastern states. Of the four most recent Category Five hurricanes to make landfall in the United States, three began as tropical storms and did not evolve until 72 hours before. As you know, hurricanes do not wait for communities to prepare for their arrival. Everything that can be done must be done ahead of time.

FEMA's plan and subsequent guidance on hurricane preparedness and mitigation has the potential to determine the fate of the areas most susceptible to hurricanes. With the necessity for additional space in order to abide by CDC guidelines, communities must have the resources and tools they need to have a robust, thorough, and safe evacuation plan. It is clear that another crisis, like a strong hurricane, coupled with the current pandemic could be calamitous and overwhelming. This extreme situation requires a new, more dynamic kind of planning for emergency managers at all levels of government in order to protect our communities.

Given the impending potential catastrophic situation that threatens Floridians and Americans along the eastern seaboard, we ask you to expeditiously supply information on FEMA's plans for the following:

- Coordination, transportation, and distribution of supplies for affected communities;
- Deployment and protection of FEMA personnel;
- Guidance and assistance for states and localities affected;
- Organization and preparation of non-congregate sheltering options for evacuees to limit transmission of COVID-19.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary responses. There may be very difficult times ahead, and it is imperative that FEMA make smart decisions to prevent unneeded pain and suffering.

Finally, we would like to reiterate the importance of FEMA quickly obligating outstanding reimbursement claims from Hurricanes Irma and Michael. It has been years since these storms severely damaged our state, and our communities need these funds to help prepare for upcoming storms.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to receiving your plans for this hurricane season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Debbie', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

/s/ Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

/s/ Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

/s/ Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress

/s/ Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

/s/ Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

/s/ Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/ Al Lawson
Member of Congress

/s/ Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

/s/ Darren Soto
Member of Congress